

Dear Governor Branstad:

This letter is sent on behalf of the Iowa Council on Homelessness (the Council), fulfilling its requirement pursuant to Iowa Code Sections 16.100A(9)(a) and 16.100A(8)(g) to advise the governor's office and make annual recommendations regarding strategies to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Iowa.

The Iowa Council on Homelessness is committed to ensuring all Iowans have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing, as well as to reducing and ending homelessness. Those affected include veterans, domestic violence victims, individuals suffering from mental illness, persons experiencing a loss of income, and those suffering from other tragedies that create homelessness. As homeless Iowans situated in the eastern and central portions of the state can utilize a broader array of housing options and services; we are striving for similar housing options and services for the western side of the state. as you are compassionately leading all Iowans. Extending this westward coverage may require your administration's assistance by convening key departments to effectively and prudently manage state resources in ensuring consistent services statewide.

As a state, we continue to move in the right direction and making measurable progress in reducing homelessness. For example, the number of persons utilizing shelter or transitional housing went from 13,006 in 2013 to 11,638 in 2014, a drop of over 10%. These statistics are gathered by the Institute for Community Alliances for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) database. However, a closer look at the numbers shows that 3,694 of those experiencing homelessness in 2014 were children, with an average age of six years. Department of Education statistics for the 2013-14 school year, which count not only children who were sheltered but children "doubled up" with friends or family, total nearly 7,000. This includes children in each of Iowa's 99 counties. Iowa's shelter and domestic violence programs and other service providers work daily with public and private partners to best utilize the limited resources that are available to prevent and reduce homelessness.

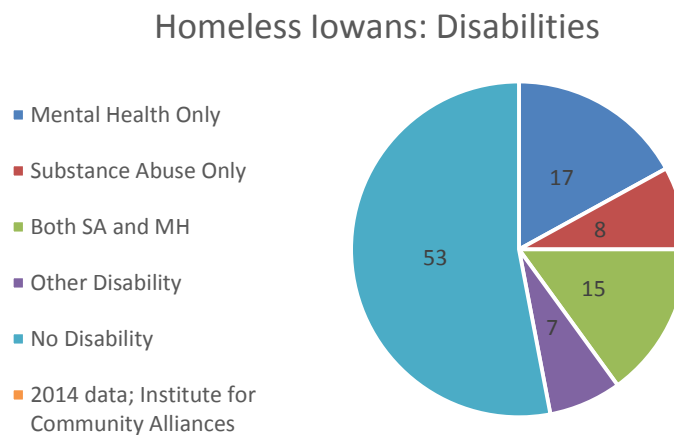
We rely on collaborative relationships with our colleagues from the Iowa Finance Authority and Institute for Community Alliances for their support and dedication. We are deeply grateful for the professionalism, administrative support, technical and financial assistance, and partnership provided by the Iowa Finance Authority.

We thank you for your administration's leadership and your investment in improving the quality of services provided to Iowans experiencing homelessness. In the past year, a written technical assistance guide and other supportive materials were created in order to assist programs seeking to better meet the standards established in 2013. This year's work continues as we seek to bring Iowa to "functional zero" level of homelessness. This simply means that the number of individuals experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness at any point does not exceed the monthly housing placement rate for those experiencing homelessness. And this has all been accomplished without the need to increase the amount of the Council's annual administrative support. **Intro sentence:**

- **support (legislation? effort?) to add a \$5 check-box option to Iowa Income Tax 1040 form, allowing taxpayers to contribute to homeless services in their region;**

- convene a meeting in 2016 of all departments to assess current effectiveness of use of federal funds in addressing homelessness and identify potential efficiencies, including any that would attract additional federal resources;
- support lawful source-of-income anti-discrimination efforts;
- secure increased funding and other resources to adequately address domestic violence and mental illness; and

Below is a graph and some other facts indicating issues faced by Iowans experiencing homelessness and progress made in serving them:



- The graph highlights the fact that many Iowans experiencing homelessness suffer from one or more disabilities, with substance abuse and mental health being most common.
- Although the average age of those experiencing homelessness dropped from 28 years to 26 years 9 months, the number of those 55 years or older increased by over a third during the same period.
- About the same number of men and women become homeless in a given year, but more than 80% of men are unaccompanied whereas women are about equally likely to be part of a family as alone.
- With significant federal support, we continue to a functional zero level of homeless veterans.

To provide you with an opportunity to address the Council, ask questions and meet some of those invested in addressing homelessness in Iowa, we invite you to attend the Council's meeting on Tuesday, March 29, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. in (to be determined). Members of the Executive Committee will contact your staff in order to make arrangements. We recognize that the executive branch requires partnership with the legislature to enact policy and legislation that ultimately improves the quality of life of Iowans. In that spirit, please know that we will be raising the above issues with legislators throughout the next session and in particular at our annual Homeless Awareness Day on the Hill, which is also March 29.

Let me close by thanking you for your continued support of funding and other investment in services to Iowans including those experiencing homelessness. We look forward to meeting with you next year!

Sincerely,

Donna J. Phillips  
Chair, Iowa Council on Homelessness

CC: Amber Lewis, Iowa Finance Authority  
Julie Eberbach, Iowa Institute for Community Alliances  
Members of the Iowa Council on Homelessness